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# Teaching vocabulary as an important way of learning language

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Here was written about the effective teaching vocabulary in English lessons for ESP classes, importance of structural method to teach vocabulary.

**Keywords:** English, vocabulary, structural method, method, teaching vocabulary, teaching English, new words.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Words are gateway to knowledge that unlocks the doors of sublime ideas, theories and principles to the readers. The competency and grip on the lexical items of language plays an important role in learning of new concepts. The students who have command and greater hold on the use of vocabulary excel in the study of different subjects. States that vocabulary learning is one of the important aspect of language learning and language use. In fact, it is what makes the essence of a language. Without vocabulary, speakers cannot convey meaning and communicate with each other in a particular language. It is divided into two main categories: active and passive vocabulary. Passive vocabulary consist of those words that the students may recognize and understand when they occur in the context, but which he/she cannot produce or use correctly in different contexts. The active vocabulary consists of those words, which the student understands, recall at a will, write with correct spellings, can pronounce correctly, and use constructively in speaking and writing. According to Allen (1983), teaching of vocabulary was neglected during 1940-1970 due to some reasons because some educationists believed that the focus of the language learning must be on grammar instead of vocabulary. One must know how the words work together in English sentence. Secondly, some of the linguists that the meanings of the words cannot be adequately taught, so, it is better to avoid teaching them also believed it. Third, some specialists were of the view that being exposed to too many words might lead the students to make mistakes in sentence construction.

However, different studies revealed that lack of command on vocabulary frequently interfere with communication, and as a result become the cause of communication breakdown. It is, therefore, an increased interest in vocabulary learning as a component of every language. It is viewed as a significant component of standardized language tests; and methodologists and program planners to the most effective ways to promote the command of vocabulary among learners are giving attention. The teachers teaching second language follow varieties of techniques and methods for teaching vocabulary. They include rote rehearsal, the use of visual aids, role-playing, vocabulary learning in a specific cultural context etc. Different techniques and methods are effective in different contexts and situations. It is, therefore essential to find out the effectiveness of different methodologies used for teaching of vocabulary and help the students and teachers to accelerate the learning process. The objectives were the followings:

- 1) To find out the comparative effectiveness of structural and definitional methods of vocabulary teaching at secondary level
- 2) To find out the effectiveness of structural and definitional methods of vocabulary teaching on the performance of high, average and low achievers
- 3) To find out the retention rate of high, average and low achievers taught with the structural and definitional methods of vocabulary teaching

To achieve the objectives of the study following null hypotheses were tested:

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1) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students taught with the structural and definitional method of vocabulary teaching

- 2) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers taught with the structural and definitional method of vocabulary teaching.
- 3) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers taught with the structural and definitional method of vocabulary teaching.
- 4) There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the average achievers taught with the structural and definitional method of vocabulary teaching.

Blachowicz and Fisher (2000) have identified four principles of vocabulary instruction. They say that the students should personalize word learning. This principle is related to active development of vocabulary that demands actual use of new words in different contexts to conduct personal matters. The students themselves decide what word to learn and how to learn. The second principle needs immersing of the students in the learning of vocabulary. It means ongoing commitment for the vocabulary learning throughout the day in different forms. It is done when language is not only exposed but also explained to students. The third principle is based on the view that word building needs multiple exposure of different intensity. A single exposure is not enough to develop rich understanding of vocabulary. It takes place in many steps over a period. Each exposure adds information how the word is used in different contexts. There is need of 12 exposures for getting mastery and proper utilization of new lexical items. The students must be provided opportunities to reflect on the learnt lexical item and to relate them with the previous knowledge. There is also need to limit in the presentation of vocabulary in a lesson or the completely academic year. The massive exposure of vocabulary may confuse the students in the use of words in spoken and written form. The last principle emphasizes that the students should be active in learning of word. They should not be passive recipient in word knowledge. They should be encouraged to make connection between their learnt and previous knowledge. It allows students to experiment with words in different ways.

According to Filmore and Snow (2000), structural approach of teaching vocabulary is based on the morphological analyses of the word. It is process of breaking the words into prefixes, root and suffixes to illustrate the meanings. It is

considered easy and practical approach of vocabulary building. The morphological features of the language such as prefixes, suffixes, and root help the learner to identify the meanings. The students do not analyze the sentences to find out the meanings of the word but analyze the word to follow its meanings. Knowledge about the root form of the word helps them to build up their vocabulary in logical and in sequenced way. After getting command over the root form of the word, there is no more difficulty to modify it as different parts of speech and build up the vocabulary. The words that are generated by the learner can be recalled easily as compared to merely listened or read. It is, therefore, necessary that the students must be provided opportunities to generate new words from the given exercises. For example, the students might be asked to form adjectives and adverbs from nouns or verbs. These exercises will greatly improve the vocabulary of the students. In the same way punctuation marks also help the reader to understand the meanings of difficult words such as Full stop indicates the completion of the thought, coma indicates continuation of the thought and semi colon, colon indicate the reversal of the thought.

Our findings indicate that repeated readings of the same story are not necessary for vocabulary acquisition if new words are explained as they are encountered in the story. The study provides further evidence of the value of reading and listening stories to children. Scott, Noel & Asselin (2003) conducted descriptive observational study on the topic: vocabulary instruction throughout the day in twenty-three upper Elementary classrooms. They examined when, where, how often and how effectively vocabulary instruction occurs in 23 ethnically diverse upper elementary schools in three districts of Canada. The observations were made consuming 308 hours in 68 days of instruction. The data revealed that only 65 % time is devoted for the development of vocabulary knowledge in language subjects, and with only 1.4 % devoted for the development of vocabulary other than language subjects. Learning how to use words is completely ignored. The focus of the learning is on the semantic aspects of vocabulary. Only to focus on the semantic areas ignoring all other areas such as socio-linguistics variation, psycholinguistics techniques etc. is not a guarantee to learn a language.

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## 2. CONCLUSION

In summary, Brown and Perry (1991) conducted comparative study of three learning strategies for ESL vocabulary acquisition. The purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of three strategies. They are keyword method, a semantic processing method and combined semantic-keyword method. All three methods were administered to group of students in actual classroom situation. Measure of recognition as well as recall was used to look at whether any differences existed in the retention of information and ability to retrieve the information. Pretest, posttest and delayed test were the instrument of the study. Six intact classes participated in this study. They were taught for 15 days for half an hour. The teachers were trained according to methods to teach students. The study revealed that semantic processing method is more effective as compared to the other methods of the study. The performance of the students taught with the semantic processing method was significantly better than all other groups taught with other methods.

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